nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, the nuclear weapon states remain unwilling to make any meaningful commitment with regard to eliminating their nuclear arsenals.

Our nuclear policy, as expressed in the CTBT negotiations, is intimately linked with our national security concerns. We have never accepted the notion that it can be considered legitimate for some countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security while denying this right to others. This has been a consistent policy, also reflected in our rejection of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).

It has been shown that knowledge and technology cannot be the monopoly of a handful of countries. In 1974, India carried out a successful peaceful nuclear explosion, demonstrating its nuclear capability. For 22 years, we have exercised a policy of unparalleled restraint and refrained from undertaking additional tests. Yet, as has been stated in this House by previous Governments, we continue to maintain our option so that we are able to take all necessary measures to cope with any threat that may be posed to the security of the nation. We cannot allow this option to be restricted in any manner if other countries remain unwilling to accept the obligation of eliminating their nuclear arsenals. We are deeply conscious of the fact that other countries in our region continue their weapons programmes, whether openly or in a clandestine manner. On the basis of recent statements and developments, we have been obliged to conclude that the nuclear weapon states have no intention of giving up their nuclear weapons. This makes it inescapable that our national security considerations will be the governing factor in our decision making.

Hon. Members are aware of the plenary statement made by our Permanent Representative in the conference on Disarmament on 20 June on CTBT. We undertook consultations on this issue, cutting across party lines, in order to ensure that the statement reflected national consensus. In the statement, we announced that India cannot subscribe to the CTBT in its present form. We have also subsequently indicated that we will be constrained not to associate with the international monitoring system being set up to verify the CTBT. We stated that in the light of our clear stand on this issue we are unable to accept any obligations which affect our sovereign right of decision making. Since then, a new draft text of the CTBT has been introduced. Discussion on this are scheduled to resume on 29 July in Geneva. On the face of it, the new draft text does not attend to the issues that we have been raising. Therefore, we cannot endorse it or accept the text in its present form. We will remain engaged in the discussion when these resume on 29th July in order to ensure that our freedom of action is not constrained in any manner. Our approach will remain a responsible approach, but we have to safeguard our national interest. If other countries reach their own consensus, that is their sovereign decision. We would expect that all countries will respect our decision and ensure that the Treaty, with which we will not be associated, not impose any obligation on India. These views will be conveyed to the Conference on Disarmament.

I have taken this opportunity to keep the hon. Members informed about the Government's policy on this issue and I hope that this will enjoy their support. I would like to assure this House that the Government sees this as an issue of vital national concern and is fully conscious of its reponsibility. We have demonstrated the strength of our conviction and national resolve in the past. We remain confident that we can do so again.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam): Madam, we want a discussion on this because this is a very serious issue and the discussion may be allowed under Rule 193.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may have important things to say. But two Ministers have to make two more statements immediately now, because they have to go to the Rajya Sabha after that. Now Shri Indrajit Gupta will make a statement regarding the incident of massacre of people in Bhojpur, Bihar.

16.15 hrs.

(iii) Incident of massacre of people in Bhojpur District of Bihar

[English]

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA): Madam, I am making a statement on the heinous crime which has resulted in the massacre of several people on the 11th of July, 1996 in the Bhojpur District of Bihar. The statement I am making is based on the latest report received from the Government of Bihar.

The hon. Members are aware the 19 persons were killed in village Bathani Tola, Barki Kharan under Sahar Police Station of Bhojpur District of Bihar on 11th July, 1996. The facts of the incident as ascertained from the Government of Bihar are as follows. Around 60 armed activists of the Ranbir Kisan Mahasangh known as the Ranbir Sena raided the village of Bathani Tola Barki Kharan on the afternoon of Jully 11, 1996. Eighteen persons were shot dead by them. Six persons were injured, of whom one also died subsequently. Twelve houses were set ablaze destroying wheat, rice, clothes, etc. kept in these houses. The provocation for the attack seems to have been to settle scores with one Maimuddin

Ahamad who was suspected of having killed two suporters of Ranbir Sena earlier.

The Government of Bihar have also reported that 30 persons have been named in the report filed in the Sahar Police Station, along with others unknown. As on date, 22 persons had been arrested. Some firearms and ammunition have been recovered. One Sub-Inspector and eight other Ranks have been suspended for dereliction of duty. The Director-General of Police, Bihar and other senior police officials rushed to the site. The district Magistrate and Superintendent of Police have been camping there since the incident.

The dependents of those killed and the surviving victims have been provided immediate relief of Rs 10,000/- cash in each. The families of the deceased have also been provided with 30 kgs. of rice and other essential commodities. The Chief Minister of Bihar visited the area on July 13, 1996 and announced relief of rupees one lakh to the next of kith and kin of the family of those killed. The Chief Minister also announced a relief of Rs.2 lakhs to the family of Naimuddin Ahmad apart from the offer of a job in cases where the bread-winner has been killed. The Union Home Secretary has further ascertained that combing operations have been launched by the Bihar Military Policy and the State Police in the area covered by four Police Stations, namely, Sahar, Sandesh, Piro and Udvant Nagar which are supposed to be the strongholds of Ranbir Sena. People have been asked to surrender their arms and efforts are being made to disarm the Ranbir Sena activists.

While there is little doubt that adequate follow up action including rehabilitation of victims will be taken up by the State Government, much more is required to be done by the State It would firstly not only need to enquire into the alleged in action on the part of the policemen posted at the site of the incident but also go deeper to check out on the mind set of the law and order enforcement machinery. Then there is the question of empowerment of the weaker sections which always have to bear the brunt of the 'mighty'. A more effective strategy to implement various schemes relating to upliftment of these sections is obviously called for. The Central Government proposes to interact with the Bihar and other State Governments to ensure ways and means to retain and enhance the efficiency of the administrative apparatus in the country The presence of an effective and responsible administration alone can prevent incident such as the one in Bhojpur

DR ASIM BALA (Navadwip) : I want to put one question to the Home Minister.

MR CHAIRMAN : Let the other Minister make his statement He has to go to Rajya Sabha After that, if you want to say anything, you can say that.

16.20 hrs.

(iv) Air Crash involving a plane belonging to Archana Airways on 11 July, 1996 near Kullu in Himachal Pradesh

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : Mr. Chairman, as I had promised in the House on 11.7.96, further details regarding the air crash of Archana Airways aircraft are now available and I would like to inform the House about the same.

The aircraft L-410 type belonging to Archana Airways crashed near village Kanda, District Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, about 30 kms. south of Bhuntar airport on 11.7.96. The aircraft hit a tree on top of the hill and then crashed into a house killing all the nine persons on board and injuring three on the ground. The aircraft caught fire and was completely destroyed.

Search and rescue parties from Indian Air Force Station, Chandigarh, District Administration of Mandi and senior Aerodrome Officer of Bhuntar Airport immediately left for the crash site and located wreckage of aircraft and mortal remains of the persons on board All the nine bodies were charred

The bodies of all the nine victims were identified and brought from the crash site to Kullu on 11.07 1996 by 9 p m After completion of the postmortem formalities next day, dead bodies were handed over to the next of kin, except those of the three Japanese passengers whose relatives were expected to reach Delhi last night

The aircraft was under the command of Capt V M Malik with Capt S Gupra as Co-pilot Malik had a total flying experience of about 8,800 hours with 1,600 hours as Co-pilot-in-command on this type of aircraft; Capt S Gupta had a total experience of about 1,800 hours with 876 hours as co-pilot on this type of aircraft

The aircraft was purchased new by M/s. Archana Airways in 1994 and had logged about 3,300 hours of flying. The aircraft was last subjected to a major check on 24 06 1996. There was no reported snag in the aircraft when it departed from Delhi on 11th July

Preliminary investigation into the cause of the accident has been initiated by the DGCA and Director of Air Safety has been appointed as the Inspector of Accidents under Rule 71 of the Aircraft Rules, 1937. The Inspector of Accidents along with an Aviation specialist Doctor left for the site of the crash on the day of the accident. Both the flight recorders have been recovered and brought to Delhi for decoding Inspection of the accident site indicated that the aircraft hit a hill (approx. 8,000 ft high) about 20 ft below the peak. Weather at the accident site was cloudy. Further investigation is in progress.